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RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL//CCJ2/HSE/CCJ5//
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UNCLAS ASHGABAT 000427

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [TINGD](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: CONSTRUCTION MINISTER ON ASHGABAT RECONSTRUCTION

REF: A. ASHGABAT 389

[1](#)B. ASHGABAT 387

Sensitive but Unclassified - Please Protect Accordingly.

[1](#)1. (SBU) Minister of Construction Batyr Gayipov told poloff on April 21 that the GOTX is carrying out a well-planned reconstruction of Ashgabat using modern technology. he confirmed that foreign companies are responsible for most of the current construction (Ref A). However,, Gayipov said that the "time of foreign construction" is coming to an end, and that Turkmenistani construction companies (Note: All state owned. End Note.) are already active building "comfortable" two story buildings for Ashgabat residents forced to vacate their existing homes to make way for future building projects (Ref B). Additional Turkmenistani citizens and companies are gaining expertise and experience working with foreign construction companies, and will soon be able to successfully compete for future building contracts.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Gayipov emphasized that safety was the GOTX's main priority in Ashgabat's reconstruction. Building and material standards are very strict and closely monitored. The GOTX is particularly concerned with seismic safety, and is clearing out "old, dangerous" buildings with new construction designed to withstand an earthquake of up to nine points on the Mercalli Scale. (Note: According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency website, an earthquake measuring nine on the Mercalli Scale would result in "considerable" damage even in structures specifically designed to withstand earthquakes. End Note.)

[1](#)3. (SBU) Biographical Note: Gayipov has been Minister of Construction since October 2005 and concurrently serves as head of the Scientific Research Institute of Seismology. He is a seismologist by training with over 35 years of experience in the construction industry, and gives the impression of someone very much at home on a construction site. Gayipov was born in 1949 in Tashkent, where his family sought refuge following the earthquake.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Comment: Gayipov's comments about Turkmenistani companies being able to compete in the future likely comes from the top as they track with recent statements by President Niyazov to the oil and gas sectors (septel). Foreign construction companies have consistently told us, however, that virtually all skilled personnel must be brought in from outside Turkmenistan. Post is skeptical that local companies will build Niyazov's showcase projects anytime soon. End Comment.

